



**MODERN SALAFISM & ITS EFFECT ON MUSLIM DISUNITY**  
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All praise belongs to Allah, the Lord of the worlds. May peace and prayers be upon our Master Muḥammad, the best of the Prophets and Messengers, and may peace and prayers be upon his family, Companions, the followers of the Companions, their followers, and all who receive his guidance until the Day of Judgment. O Allah! Inspire us with uprightness and guide us with Your guidance and subtle mercy unto the Straight Path; the path of the clear truth, and give us a good end [death], o Lord of the worlds!

**PRELIMINARY STATEMENT**

Allah, the Exalted, revealed this upright religion of Islam to the best of His creation, our Master Muḥammad, the best of the Prophets and Messengers. He made him the seal of the Prophets and Messengers and made him a witness over his nation, and He made his nation a witness over other nations. Allah, the Exalted, said: ﴿And your Lord would not have destroyed the cities due to injustice while their people were reformers. And if your Lord had willed, He could have made mankind one nation; but they will not cease to differ. Except whom your Lord has given mercy, and for that He created them. But the word of your Lord is to be fulfilled that: “I will surely fill Hell with jinn and men all together.”﴾ [Hūd: 117-119] Imām Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī said in his exegesis, *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*:

Know that He, the Exalted, did not destroy the cities except due to injustice. There are numerous points to this.

1-What is meant by injustice here is polytheism [*shirk*]. The Exalted said: ﴿Indeed, polytheism is the tremendous injustice﴾ [Luqmān: 13]. This means that if the inhabitants of the cities are reformers and [upright] in their transactions and dealings between them, Allah does not destroy them merely on account of the fact that they are pagans. The upshot of this is that the punishment that entails complete extermination does not descend upon a people merely because they believe in polytheism and things that are disbelief; rather that punishment only descends when they commit wrongdoings in their transactions with others and endeavour to harm and commit injustice. For this reason, the jurists said that the rights of Allah are based upon ease and pardon, whereas the rights of the servants are based upon stricture and narrowness.

It is mentioned in the report: “Dominion shall remain even with disbelief, but it shall not remain with injustice.” Therefore, the meaning of the verse ﴿And your Lord would not have destroyed the cities unjustly...﴾ is that He will not destroy them merely on account of their polytheism so long as they are reformers and so long as they deal with each other with what is right and correct. This is Ahl al-Sunna’s interpretation of the verse. They said that the proof for it is that the people of Nūḥ, Hūd, Ṣāliḥ, Lūṭ, and Shu‘ayb were only punished with complete extermination – as Allah, the

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Exalted mentioned about them – because of the harm and oppression to which they subjected the creation.

**2-**The second point regarding its interpretation is the view chosen by the Mu'tazila, that had He, the Exalted, destroyed them even though they were reformers, He would not be exalted above oppression, so consequently, He did not do that, and rather He destroyed them due to their wrong actions. Then He, the Exalted, said: «And if your Lord had willed, He could have made mankind one nation...». The Mu'tazila understand this verse to refer to the will of compulsion and obligation, which we discussed earlier. Then He, the Exalted, said: «...but they will not cease to differ. Except whom your Lord has given mercy». This refers to the man's differing with regards to religious beliefs, behaviours, and actions.

You should know that there is no way for us to fully enumerate the various doctrines of the world here. Whoever wishes may read our book titled *al-Riyāḍ al-Mūniqa*. With that however, we will mention a comprehensive categorization of all the schools of thought. We say: people are divided into two groups. One group attests to the physical sciences, such as our knowledge that fire is hot and that the sun shines, as well as the self-evident knowledge, such as our knowledge that negation and affirmation cannot be united together. The other group denies these things, and they are the Sophists. Those who attest to these things [the first group] are the great majority of the inhabitants of the world. They are further divided into two groups. One group submits that it is possible to arrange these self-evident sciences in a manner that results in non-self evident scientific results. The other group eschews investigation into the sciences, and they [the latter] are few in number.

The first group are the great majority of the inhabitants of the world and they are further divided into two groups. One group of them does not affirm an original starting point for this physical universe, and they are the minority. The other group affirms that it has a starting point, and they are further divided into two groups. One group of them says that this starting point [creation] is intrinsically necessary for the Divine Entity – and they are the majority of the philosophers of this age. The other group says that He [the Divine] is possessed of free will in His actions – and they are the majority of the inhabitants of the world.<sup>1</sup> They are further divided into two groups. One group of them says that He [the Creator] did not send a Messenger to the servants, and the other group says that He did send a Messenger. The former are the *Barāhima* and the latter are the possessors of Sacred Laws and religions: the Muslims, the Christians, the Jews, and the Magians.

Each group has their own inestimable differences. The intellects are shaky and paths of pursuit are obscure and the disputes of imagination and surmise are unending. If it is seen as good for one who spends his life in the field of medicine to say: “The life-span is short and the field of medicine is vast; grasping it is difficult and there is danger in experimentation”, then it is good, *a fortiori*, for the same to be said regarding these lofty pursuits and obscure areas of research.

It might be said: “You interpreted His words: «but they will not cease to differ», saying that it refers to the differences in religions; what is your proof for that, and why can it not be interpreted as differences in skin colour, language, provision, and works?” We say in response: the proof for it is the verse before that, «if your Lord had willed, He could have made mankind one nation». It is necessary to interpret this differing as one that prevents them from being one nation. In the verse

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<sup>1</sup> i.e., it is not intrinsically necessary for Allah to create the universe. [t]

right after it, it states: ﴿Except whom your Lord has given mercy﴾, hence, it is necessary to interpret this differing in such a way that allows for it to be given exception by His words: ﴿Except whom your Lord has given mercy﴾ – and this is all we have said.

Allah, the Exalted, said: ﴿Except whom your Lord has given mercy﴾. Our companions [colleagues] inferred from this verse that guidance and faith are not obtained save with Allah's act of creation thereof. This is because the verse proves that the removal of disagreements in matters of religion cannot be obtained except by he who is shown special mercy by Allah. That mercy is not an expression denoting the giving of power and intellect and the sending of Messengers and Books and the elimination of excuses, for all of these things are found with the disbelievers [as well]. All that remains is to say that this mercy is when Allah creates right guidance and gnosis within man. Al-Qāḍī said something to the effect that the phrase ﴿Except whom your Lord has given mercy﴾ means for a person to become one of the people of Paradise and reward, with Allah showing him mercy by bestowing reward. Another possible interpretation is "Except he who is shown mercy by Allah with His subtle kindness, becoming a believer due to His subtle kindness and ease." Both of these latter interpretations are extremely weak. The reason for the weakness of the first one is because His statement: ﴿but they will not cease to differ. Except whom your Lord has given mercy﴾ indicates that this differing only ceases due to this mercy, which entails that this mercy must take the role of a preceding cause for the removal of this differing, and that the reward follows after the differing ceases. In that case, differing takes the role of a cause and that which is caused; therefore it is farfetched to interpret this mercy as reward.

Regarding the second view that interprets this mercy as subtle kindness, we say: all of the subtle acts of kindness that He does for the believer are also done for the disbeliever. This mercy here is specific for the believer, so it must be something additional to those subtle acts of kindness. Moreover, it should be asked: does or does not the receiving of these subtle acts of kindness entail that the existence of faith is preponderant over its non-existence? If that is not entailed, then the presence or absence of those subtle acts of kindness in relation to the obtainment of this objective would be one and the same, and would not be a subtle act of kindness for him.

If it is in fact entailed, then [as we] clarified in our books on the rational sciences, whenever there is preponderance there is obligation [i.e. something is necessary]; consequently, obtaining faith is from Allah. That which proves that the obtainment of faith is only by Allah's creation is that as long as faith is not distinguished from disbelief and as long as knowledge is not distinguished from ignorance, it is not possible to bring faith and knowledge into being. This distinction is only obtained when it is known that one of these two beliefs is concomitant with what is believed and that the other is not. This knowledge can only be obtained when one knows that belief in himself. How can that be when it entails that it is not valid for a servant to endeavour to gain/form knowledge of something until after he knows it, which further entails forming what is formed and obtaining what is already obtained [*taḥṣīl al-ḥāṣil*], both of which are impossible. It is therefore established that ending differences in the religion and gaining knowledge and guidance cannot be obtained save with Allah's creation thereof – and this is the desired conclusion.

The Exalted said: ﴿and for that He created them﴾. There are three opinions regarding this statement. [One] Ibn 'Abbās said "And for mercy He created them." This is the preferred opinion of the majority of the Mu'tazila. They said: "It is impermissible to say that they were created for differences, and this is proven from various angles. The first angle is that it is more fitting that the pronoun refers to that which is mentioned in the closest proximity to it, rather than referring to

that which is further away. That which is in closest proximity here is [the word] mercy, and that which is further away is [the word] differing. The second angle is to state: had He, the Exalted, created them for differing and [at the same time] wanted them to have faith, it would be impermissible for Him to punish them for that, as their differing would be considered obedience to Him. The third angle is to state: if we explain the verse, giving it this meaning, it would be concomitant with the statement of the Exalted: ﴿And I have not created men or jinn except to worship Me﴾.”

If it is retorted: “But if the verse meant ‘*And for mercy He created them*’, He would have said ‘*And for that [tilka] He created them*’, and not: ‘*And for that [dhālika] He created them*.’”<sup>2</sup>, we respond by saying: the feminine structure of the word mercy [*rahma*] is not literal; it is interpreted as bounty and forgiveness, as in His statement: ﴿This [*hādha*]<sup>3</sup> is a mercy from my Lord﴾ [*al-Kahf*: 98] and: ﴿And do not sow corruption upon the earth after its reformation﴾ [al-‘Arāf: 56].

[2]The second view posits that it means: “and He created them for differing”. The third view, which is the preferred view, is that He created the people of mercy for mercy, and the people of differing for differing. Abū Ṣāliḥ narrated from Ibn ‘Abbās that he said: “Allah created the people of mercy so they do not differ, and [He created] the people of torment in order that they differ; and He created Paradise and its denizens and created the Hell-fire and its denizens.” There are many angles supporting this interpretation and its correctness. [A] The unequivocal evidence which proves that neither knowledge nor ignorance can be obtained within the servant save by Allah’s creation thereof. [B] It can be said that since He, the Exalted, ruled that some will differ and that some are the people of mercy, and He knew that, it is therefore impossible for that to be reversed, for otherwise that would entail knowledge transforming into ignorance, which is impossible. [C] The Exalted said right after that: ﴿And the word of your Lord was completed: [that] I shall most certainly fill the Hell-fire with jinn and men all together﴾. This is an explicit statement showing that the Exalted created some people for guidance and Paradise, and some people for misguidance and the Fire – and this strengthens this interpretation.

Ibn ‘Aṭīyya said in *al-Muḥarrar al-Wajīz fī Tafsīr al-Kitāb al-‘Azīz* (3/215):

﴿And had your Lord willed...﴾ As Qatāda said, it means “He would have made them one believing nation, so that do not disbelieve and so they are not punished, however; the Exalted and Sublime did not will that, and consequently, they shall not cease differing in their religious beliefs, doctrines, and opinions.” This is the interpretation posited by the majority [of exegetes].

Al-Ḥasan, ‘Aṭā’, Mujāhid, and others said that those shown mercy and made as exceptions are the believers and that they do not differ. One group says that they shall not cease differing with regards to felicity and wretchedness, and this is close to the first meaning, for it is the fruit of religious beliefs and differing in them. This interpretation would include the believers, as they differ with the disbelievers. Al-Ḥasan also said that they shall never cease differing regarding [their respective levels of] poverty and wealth. Al-Qāḍī Abū Muḥammad said: “This statement is farfetched. The meaning of the verse is that Allah excluded from the pronoun in “they will not

<sup>2</sup> The point being is that in Arabic, the word for mercy, “*rahma*” is a feminine noun, which means that the demonstrative pronoun that signifies it must also be feminine. In Arabic, the demonstrative pronoun that designates feminine nouns is *tilka*, and the demonstrative pronoun that designates masculine nouns is *dhālika*. [t]

<sup>3</sup> *Hādha* is a demonstrative pronoun for masculine nouns/objects that are close up. [t]

cease” the people whom He had shown mercy by guiding them to faith and giving them divine success towards it.

«Except whom your Lord has given mercy, and for that He created them» The exegetes differ about the meaning of His statement «and for that He created them». One group said that He created them for the aforementioned day that is witnessed (the Day of Judgement). Another group said that it is an allusion to His earlier words: «From them are the wretched and the felicitous», in other words, for that He created them.

Al-Qāḍī Abū Muḥammad said: “Even though these two meanings are correct, the distant [linkage] of the pronoun is not good.” Ash’hab narrated from Mālik that He [Allah] said that as an allusion to the fact that one group shall be in Paradise and another group shall be in the Blazing Fire. Al-Qāḍī Abū Muḥammad said: “So, the allusion to that came with two matters: differing and mercy. This was stated by Ibn ‘Abbās and was the preferred view of al-Ṭabarī, and the pronoun in ‘created them’ refers to both [groups]. Mujāhid and Qatāda said that it [the pronoun] refers back to the mercy that is mentioned in His statement «Except whom your Lord has given mercy». In other words, He created those shown mercy for mercy. Al-Ḥasan said ‘And that indicates the differing found in His statement: «they will not cease differing»”

Al-Qāḍī Abū Muḥammad said: “This can be retorted against by asking how He could create them for differing and is that the intent behind their creation? A separate point can be made, that the principle in the Sacred Law is that Allah, the Exalted and Sublime, created some for felicity and some for wretchedness, and then made easy the path for which each were created. This is explicitly mentioned in the rigorously authentic Ḥadīth. After that, He made the differing with the truth of the religion a sign of wretchedness to which punishment is connected. Hence, it is valid to understand His statement to mean: “And for differing He created them” – that is, due to the fruit of differing and its resultant wretchedness.

It is also valid to interpret the governing particle *lām* as a “*lām* of becoming” [*lām al-ṣayrūra*], that is, in order that their affair leads to that, even if they did not intend to differ themselves. Al-Qāḍī Abū Muḥammad said: “The meaning of His words «And I have not created man or jinn except that they worship Me» is: “In order that I command them with worship and make it a duty upon them.” Hence, He expressed it by way of mentioning the fruit of the command and its end result.”

His statement: «And the word of your Lord was completed: [that] I surely fill the Hell-fire with jinn and men all together» means that His decree was carried out and His command was actualized. The *lām* particle in «I shall most certainly fill...» is a particle of swearing an oath [*lām al-qasam*], as the word consists of an oath. The word Jinn is a plural that does not have a singular form. It is from [the verb] *ajanna*, which is when something is concealed. The letter *hā*’ in *Jinna* الجنة is for hyperbole. Now, if the word Jinn can be used in the singular, then *Jinna* is its plural.

The erudite scholar, Abū al-Su’ūd said in his exegesis (4/248):

«And had your Lord willed He could have made mankind one nation» united upon the truth and the religion of Islam in such a way that not a single person would differ about it, however; He did not will that, so they will not agree upon the truth. «And they will not cease to differ» about the truth. In other words, they will be in opposition to it, as the Exalted said: «And

none differed over it except those who were given it – after the clear proofs came to them – out of jealous animosity among themselves»

«Except whom your Lord has given mercy»: except a folk who, by Allah’s bounty, were guided to the truth, agreeing upon it and not differing over it. In other words, they did not oppose it. Interpreting this as differing in an unrestricted sense that includes both the one who is right and the one who is wrong is invalid, as per the exception mentioned. «And for that»: that is, due to the aforementioned differing «He created them», that is, those mentioned after the exception – those who differ. The governing particle of *lām* [here] refers to either punishment or mercy...so the pronoun refers to people entire and the *lām* takes on a figurative meaning that is general for both meanings. «But the word of your Lord is to be fulfilled»: that is, His Divine threat or His statement to the Angels: «“I will surely fill Hell with jinn and men all together.”». This means: from the disobedient of both [men and jinn] all together, or both of them all together and not one [only].

Allah, the Exalted, said: «Say: “He is the One able to send upon you affliction from above you or from beneath your feet or to confuse you [so you become] sects and make you taste the violence of one another.” Look how We diversify the signs that they might understand» [al-An‘ām: 65]. And Imām Muslim narrated in his *Ṣaḥīḥ* collection (4/2216 # 2890) from ‘Āmir b. Sa‘d, from his father: One day, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ went to ‘Āliya, until he happened upon the Mosque of Banū Mu‘āwiya. He entered and offered two units of prayer and we prayed behind him. He then supplicated to his Lord for a long time and then turned to us and said: “I asked my Lord for three things. He granted me two [of them] and denied me one. I asked my Lord that He does not destroy my nation by famine and He granted that to me. I asked him that He does not destroy my nation by flood and He granted that to me. I then asked Him that he does place infighting among them and He denied me.”

From all of this we can conclude that the Islamic nation will experience divisions in opinions, schools of thought, and beliefs, and that this is all a test from Allah, the Exalted. Consequently, the people must see to it that they behave in a way that is best.

## INTRODUCTION

As a term, the “Islamic nation” includes within it every individual who affiliates his or herself with Islam, so long as he or she has not left it by believing that which necessitates disbelief: and provided that he or she believes in that which is known by necessity to be from the religion, whether it is from the issues of doctrine, such as faith in Allah’s existence and that He is All-Powerful, belief in the Prophethood of our Master Muḥammad ﷺ and that he is the seal of all the Prophets and Messengers and that his Sacred Law abrogates all previous revealed laws (whether or not it is submitted that they are altered or not), or from the issues of action, such prayer, Zakāt, fasting, Ḥajj, and other practical rulings in the Sacred Law that are affirmed and that do not accept independent scholarly judgement [*ijtihād*].

It is well-known that some doctrinal positions are self-evident and that whoever opposes them has disbelieved, whereas other doctrinal positions are unequivocal but not self-evident, in which the one who opposes them is declared an innovator (and some might impute him with disbelief), and yet other doctrinal positions are speculative and not self-evident, in which case the one who opposes them is not declared an innovator.

In the Ḥadīth narration it is mentioned that this Islamic nation shall split into seventy-three sects. Now, I know that many people disagree regarding the authenticity of this Ḥadīth's chain of narration, however we also know that the number mentioned is not necessarily exact – meaning, it is not explicit that the number of sects will grow until they reach that exact number, although it would not be problematic if they did reach that number.

Some people have adopted the viewpoint that disagreement is intrinsically harmful and that it leads to decline. If it is said that the Islamic nation, the nation of the Prophet ﷺ, will split into more sects than the sects of the Jews and Christians, it is questioned that how can it be said that this nation is preferred over other nations?

At first glance, this might seem like a good question, however; we do not submit that disagreement is completely blameworthy or that differing entails that the status of this nation will decline vis-à-vis other nations. Although we might submit that some forms of disagreement do in fact lead to disunity, we do not submit that every form of disagreement leads to this so-called decline; even though we believe that this nation will split or has split into more sects than the sects of the Jews and the Christians, still this splitting that will or has taken place within the nation of the Prophet ﷺ does not imply – in general – that its state has diminished, because the group of the people of truth: Ahl al-Sunna wa al-Jamā'a, has historically been and continues to be the overwhelming majority, and the number of practicing scholars among them are more numerous than the scholars from all the other sects combined.

That is not the case with the sectarian divisions among the Jews and Christians. Their sects were like or equal in number, which in turn entailed their weakness as nations. With the Islamic nation this is not the case. Because Ahl al-Sunna wa al-Jamā'a are greater in number and because they have historically possessed more scholars in various places, the presence of other sects has not affected them as much as it has the other nations. The negative effects that sectarianism has had on other nations have not affected the Islamic nation in the same way. No matter how much the opponents object to this Ḥadīth, and no matter how many doubts are raised about its chain of narration, present day reality confirms that this nation has in fact differed. It is of no benefit to say – after this differing has already occurred – that the Ḥadīth in question cannot be relied upon because it is weak or because its chain of narration has problems. Both present day reality and sense perception confirm a large portion of the meaning in this Ḥadīth.

From all of that, we conclude that sectarian division is a reality in this nation and that we have our differences just like other nations. According to the scholars of Islam and many thinkers in this field, what is important is the relationship between coexistence and cooperation among the Muslims, and the presence of these disagreements.

Although I shall address this at the conclusion of my talk, I would like to bring it to your attention here as well, as it is important in relation to the main subject. It is not hidden to you all that disagreements have occurred ever since the first generations, i.e. the generation of the Companions and the Followers. The Khawārij, the early Shiites, the first Qadirites, and others, all manifested in the Islamic nation during the first generations that were described with goodness. Nay; many of the sects that were present in that time are no longer existent in our time or the time before us. This proves that there is no inherent link between sectarian differences and decline. How can this be asserted when the Prophet ﷺ bore witness to the goodness of the early generations?



All of the aforementioned sects became sects because they split from Ahl al-Sunna wa al-Jamā'a – the people of the truth. Differences occurred because they opposed the people of the truth, which is why each sect was distinguished from Ahl al-Sunna by specific ideas and fundamentals. Ahl al-Sunna remained, distinguished by their general affiliation to Islam, and its scholars saw no pressing need to announce their distinction from others or vice versa, until tens of years later when the opponents gained in strength and proclaimed their differences with Ahl al-Sunna: going to extremes and claiming that they were in fact the people of the Sunna to the exclusion of everyone else. When Ahl al-Sunna wa al-Jamā'a observed this behaviour from their opponents, the scholars and verifiers among them went out of their way to write books and distinguish between truth and falsehood. Perhaps that was one of the greatest causes allowing for the Mu'tazilite, the Shiite, the Kharijite, and the Qadirite to be distinguished with unique signs, whereas one who is not a part of those sects is considered to be upon the default foundation of old, namely the foundation of Ahl al-Sunna wa al-Jamā'a.

## THE CONCEPT OF A *SALAF* AND A *KHALAF*

Here, we shall endeavour to explain the concept of the *salaf* and the *khalaf* according to our scholars who are well-considered, and according to the Wahhābīs and others who are in agreement with them. We shall explain the universal foundations upon which these concepts are based. They shall serve as foundational principles for studying the effect of the Wahhābīs and those who follow Ibn Taymiyya.

### **The Concept of a *Salaf* and a *Khalaf* according to our Scholars**

As is well-known to you, the esteemed attendees and scholars, within our scholarly heritage there is a concept of a *salaf* and a *khalaf*. This concept is only temporal in nature, and it is not a concept that marks a separate reality between those present in early times and those who came later, in the sense that those who are not from the *Salaf* are despised and those who are from the *Salaf* are praised unrestrictedly.

When the verifying scholars of Ahl al-Sunna would speak about the terms "*salaf*" and "*khalaf*", they primarily meant their respective time periods. And when they would praise the *Salaf*, they would intend those among them who were known to be from Ahl al-Sunna; who were for the most part identified with the first three generations.

It is no secret to the esteemed scholars that based on this definition, many of the sects we mentioned were present during the time of the *Salaf*, such as the Qadirites who appeared in the time of the Companions and Followers, the extreme Shiites, and many sects among the anthropomorphists who appeared in the early history of Islam. It is impossible to say that all of these sects were praiseworthy and good merely because they existed – without any choice of their own – in an early time period.

Due to the depth of knowledge our scholars possessed, they would distinguish between the *Salaf* who were from the people of the truth, and the *Salaf* who proclaimed their differences with the former. The scholar's praise for the *Salaf* is incontrovertibly reserved for the *Salaf* who were from Ahl al-Sunna wa al-Jamā'a; not for others, even if they were from the *Salaf* temporally.

In light of this definition, the scholars called those who came after these generations the "*khalaf*", and with that in mind, the terms *salaf* and *khalaf* were originated. Considering this, some of Ahl al-Sunna are among the *Salaf* and some are among the *Khalaf*. The verifying scholars distinguished between the *Salaf* and *Khalaf* in a general sense insofar as methodology is concerned; the distinction is not between truth on

one side and falsehood on the other. In other words, most of the *Salaf* took to dealing with the issues and pursuing the sciences in a general sense (barring some issues and circumstances). This was the predominant situation during their time, but it was not universal. Conversely, the *Khalaf* pursued these sciences and dealt with these issues in a detailed fashion and with scholarly verification and investigation. They eschewed generalities. Having said that, this is not a universal judgement of them in the sense that no one among them took an alternative route. This was the predominant situation during their time.

These facts serve as the basis for the scholars' statement about figurative interpretation [*ta'wīl*] and non-committal [*tafwīḍ*] and realising the doctrine of Divine transcendence that: "The way of the *Salaf* was non-committal – although some of them engaged in figurative interpretation – and the way of the latter-day scholars is figurative interpretation – although some of them take a position of non-committal." Both the position of figurative interpretation and non-committal are well-considered and relied upon by Ahl al-Sunna, past and present. Both positions lead to the doctrine of Divine transcendence, which is the doctrine of the people of truth.

Consequently, according to our scholars, both the *Salaf* and the *Khalaf* are from Ahl al-Sunna, and neither group is opposed to it [the way of Ahl al-Sunna] or deviated. We believe in the continued connection of truth between the scholars of the *Salaf* and the *Khalaf* from the Ash'arīs and Māturīdīs: they are united upon one creed and never has there appeared a time in which there was mutual boycott or disunity between them.

### **The Concept of a *Salaf* and a *Khalaf* according to our Opponents**

We mentioned that the basis for our understanding lies in the natural progression of time and the continuous development of the sciences and the respective generalities and details between the two eras. By opponents, we primarily mean the Wāḥhābīs: those who follow Shaykh Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Wāḥhāb, and by extension, the secularists (as we shall soon explain).

Let us now take a moment to focus on Wāḥhābīte thought, or Taymīte thought (i.e. the followers of Ibn Taymiyya) as I sometimes like to call it. Their view-point can be summed up in the following: the *Salaf* were upon the true creed and their affair remained for a while. Afterwards their occurred a disconnection and the innovators from other sects became dominant, and that has continued unabated till today – barring of course, the specific time periods in which certain callers to their doctrine appeared. The most important of these callers, according to the Wāḥhābīs, are Ibn Taymiyya and his student Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, both of whom appeared in the eighth century *Hijra*.

Were you to ask the Wāḥhābīs and the modern-day Salafis about a fully connected chain of scholars spread across the world who were known by the common people for their teaching of the religion (which is only fitting for the people of truth whom the Messenger of Allah ﷺ described as being victorious and upon the truth, unharmed by those who oppose them, until the affair of Allah [the Last Hour] arrives), they would not be able to produce a single one, and they would only be able to name individuals from the eighth century, individuals in the ninth century, and some individuals in the fourth century, and so on. They will never be able to provide proof for a continued connection through the times and places in which the Islamic nation has spread.

The most they will mention to you are disconnected and disparate individuals in separate times and places; and this in my view is one of the biggest proofs demonstrating the falsehood of their ideas, beliefs, and rulings in which they oppose Ahl al-Sunna wa al-Jamā'a. Because of this fact, they employ various stratagems in order to somehow prove that some Ash'arī scholars were in fact from their own, arguing

that they were scholars of Ḥadīth or Qur’ānic exegetes, such as Imām Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, Imām al-Nawawī, al-Bayhaqī, and Ibn ‘Asākir. After some time, when they discover that these scholars were in explicit agreement with the doctrine of the Ash‘arīs, they retract their statement and declare their innocence from them, or perhaps some Wahhābīs suffice by saying that these scholars “were in agreement with the Ash‘arīs in certain issues only, and not in the fundamentals of their doctrine”.

These are mere claims for which they will never find any evidence. The Wahhābīs reason that these scholars were in agreement with the Ash‘arīs because the Ash‘arīs were the majority, and thus, they were influenced not because of their [the Ash‘arī’s] doctrine, but because of their close companionship to them. They are seemingly unaware that this theory of individual scholars becoming affected and influenced by doctrines, if affirmed, is an insult to these very scholars.

It is clear to us now that the reality of the Wahhābī school is the belief that the people of this time and those before them are disconnected from the creed of the Salaf. This is why they do not rely upon the opinions and views of many scholars or hold them in a position of esteem unless they are from their own ranks.

### **The Effect of this upon the Secularists**

This understanding that is deeply embedded in the minds of the Wahhābīs and modern-day Salafis has proven to be the greatest cause disconnecting the present day Umma from its past. It is no secret that this mental separation weakens the Umma both in ideas and beliefs, and leaves them to fall victim to attacks from those who oppose them in the fundamentals of the religion. It is also no secret that if this disconnection is true, it will serve as the greatest opening, allowing the secularists to find fault with the fundamentals of the religion.

This has in fact occurred; there are groups of secularists who find fault with the fundamentals of the religion and who do not attest to the fundamentals of Ahl al-Sunna wa al-Jamā’a. Most of their objections stem from this point of view; a refusal to submit to the understandings and rulings issued by the scholars over successive generations, whether concerning issues of creed, issues of jurisprudence, or other issues. They claim that these opinions are merely the opinions of other humans and that they are not obliged to hold fast to them, rather; they claim that they must go back to the original sources and commit to a re-reading of the religious texts and reach new conclusions that are suitable for this day and age.

The secularists have adopted the fundamental premise of the Wahhābīs and added to it by going well beyond the Salaf. They claim to refer back to the Book and the Sunna directly, resulting in what is today called a “modern reading of our heritage”, a “modern reading of the Qur’ān”, or a “modern reading of our history”: these things are nothing more than gross distortions, reminding us of the distortions of the Qarmatites and Batinites of old!

## **STATEMENTS FROM THE CALLERS OF MODERN-DAY SALAFISM**

Here, we shall reproduce statements from some of the pillars of modern-day Salafism and those who laid down its ground work. These statements are reproduced as examples only; it is not our intention to discuss the history of this movement. We shall endeavour to explain some of them in a manner that is fitting.

## MUḤAMMAD B. ‘ABD AL-WAHHĀB

### 1- The Scholastic Theologians are Disbelievers

Shaykh Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb said:

Having said that, the scholastic theologians and their followers are from the most clever and intelligent of people; they are possessed of such astuteness, memorization, and understanding, which would bewilder one possessed of reasonable intelligence. Both they and their followers attest to the fact that they oppose the Salaf; even the Imāms of the theologians, when they refuted the philosophers’ figurative interpretations of the verses of commands and prohibitions, who said, for instance, that “What is meant by fasting is concealment of our secrets; and what is meant by Ḥajj is the visiting of our Shaykhs; and what is meant by Jibrīl is the active intellect”, and other types of falsehood – when they [the theologians] refuted them, saying that this explanation goes against what is well-known by necessity from the religion of Islam, the philosophers retorted: “You deny Allah’s elevation above His creation and His rising above the Throne, even though both are mentioned in the Books upon the tongues of the Messengers and are agreed upon by all of the Muslims and the adherents of the other religions – so how can our figurative interpretation be considered a distortion, yet yours is considered correct?” – when presented with this retort, none of the theologians are able to respond.

What this means is that their doctrine, along with being corrupt in and of itself and in opposition to the intellects, is also opposed to the religion of Islam, the Book, the Messenger, and the Salaf entire. They mention in their books that they oppose the Salaf, while at the same time their innovation has spread to scholar and ignorant alike, covering the whole world.

I adjure you to contemplate this issue; the Salaf have many words and writings on the fundamentals of the religion, the invalidation of the words of the theologians, and writings charging them with disbelief. Those who mentioned this among the latter-day Shāfi’is include: al-Bayhaqī, al-Baghawī, and Ismā’īl al-Taymī. Those after them include al-Ḥāfiẓ al-Dhahabī, and those before them include: Ibn Surayj, al-Dāraqutnī, and others.

All of them were upon this, so examine closely the books of these individuals; if you bring me a single word stating that even a single man among them refrained from censuring the theologians and did not accuse them of disbelief, do not accept anything from me ever again! With all of this and its manifest clarity, [the contrary] has spread among you, to the point where you claim that Ahl al-Sunna are the theologians – and Allah’s help is sought!”

For this, you should examine the books of these individuals; if you bring me a single word stating that even a single man among them refrained from censuring the theologians and did not accuse them of disbelief, do not accept anything from me ever again! With all of this and its manifest clarity, [the contrary] has spread among you, to the point where you claim that Ahl al-Sunna are the theologians – and Allah’s help is sought!”<sup>4</sup>

See – may Allah have mercy upon you – how he explicitly mentions the charge of disbelief against the theologians, and then attributes that to al-Bayhaqī and others. This attribution to al-Bayhaqī is undoubtedly false, as he was a theologian upon the way of al-Ash‘arī. In addition to that, see how he

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<sup>4</sup> The first treatise found in *Tārīkh Najd*, by Shaykh Ḥusayn b. Ghannām, edited by Dr. Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Asad (page 222)

exaggerated and claimed that there is a consensus that they are imputed with disbelief! This clearly illustrates the disconnection between the Umma and its scholars that we said is an implication of the Wahhābī doctrine.

## 2 – Those who perform the act of *Tawassul* are described as Pagans

In his essay found in *al-Durar al-Saniyya* he said:

And I shall mention to you something of what Allah mentioned in His Book as a response to the words used as an argument against us by the pagans of our time. We say: responding to the people of falsehood is from two routes: a general route and a detailed route. The general route is the mighty affair and the great benefit for the one who truly understands it, and that is the statement of the Exalted: ﴿It is He who has revealed unto you the Book, wherein are plain verses, which are the foundation of the Book; others are ambiguous. As for those in whose hearts is deviation: they seek out that which is ambiguous of it, seeking mischief, and seeking its explanation – yet none know its explanation save Allah﴾ [Āl-‘Imrān: 6]

It is authentically reported from the Messenger of Allah ﷺ that he said: “When you see those who follow what is ambiguous of it, [know that] they are those named by Allah, so beware of them.” To illustrate this, when one of the pagans say: ﴿Indeed, the friends of Allah: no fear shall come upon them, nor shall they grieve﴾, and that intercession is the truth, and that the Prophets possess rank with Allah, or when he mentions some words from the Prophet ﷺ by which he seeks to infer from it something that supports his falsehood, and you do not understand the meaning of the words he says – answer him by saying: “Indeed, Allah mentioned that those who have deviance in their hearts follow what is ambiguous”, and mention what I told you, that Allah said that the pagans attested to godhood [*rubūbiyya*], and that He charged them with disbelief because of their attachment to the Prophets, the Angels, and the saints, even though they said: ﴿These are our intercessors with Allah﴾. This matter is clear-cut and manifest; no one is able to change its meaning. [So say] “That which you have mentioned to me, o pagan, from the Qur’ān or from the words of the Prophet ﷺ, I understand not its meaning, however I am absolutely sure that Allah’s words do not contradict each other and that the words of the Prophet ﷺ do not oppose the words of Allah.” This is a good and upright answer; however none understand it save he who is granted success by Allah. Do not belittle it, because it is as the Exalted said: ﴿And it is not received save by those who are patient, and it is not received save by he who possesses a great portion﴾

... If he retorts by saying: “These verses were revealed regarding those who worshipped idols; how can you make the righteous like idols, and how can you make the Prophets like idols?”, then answer him with the aforementioned response. If he attests that the disbelievers bore witness that godhood in its entirety is for Allah, and that they did not intend anything from what they did other than [gaining] intercession, yet he still wishes to made a distinction between their action and his action using that argument, mention to him that among the disbelievers were those who called upon/worshipped the righteous; and among them were those who called upon/worshipped the saints, regarding whom, Allah said: ﴿Those whom they worship seek a means of approach unto their Lord, which of them is closest﴾; and they call upon/worship ‘Īsā b. Maryam and his mother, and Allah, the Exalted, said: ﴿The Messiah, the son of Maryam is nothing more than a Messenger before whom there were other Messengers; and his mother is veraciously truthful. Both of them used to eat food; see then, how We clarify to them the signs, and see then, how they deny. Say: “Do you worship besides Allah that which cannot harm or benefit you, and Allah, He is the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing?”﴾

Also mention His statement: ﴿On the Day in which they will all be gathered, then the Angels will say: “Were these the ones who used worship you?” They will say: “Glorified are You! You are our Protector besides them; rather they used to worship the jinn; most of them used to believe in them!”﴾ So, say to him: “You know that those who intended the idols [with worship] were charged by Allah with disbelief, and He also charged those who intended the righteous [with worship] with disbelief, and the Messenger of Allah ﷺ fought them.” If he retorts: “The disbelievers want from them, however I bear witness that Allah is the One who harms and benefits and that He is the disposer of the affairs; I only want from Him, and the righteous possess nothing of the matter; however I go to them, hoping for their intercession by Allah”, the answer is: this is identical to the statement of the disbelievers! Read to him their statement: ﴿We do not worship them except for them to draw us closer to Allah﴾, and: ﴿These are our intercessors with Allah﴾...

...It can also be said to him: “Regarding your statement, that ‘polytheism [shirk] is the worship of idols’, do you mean to say that polytheism is restricted to this and that relying upon the righteous and calling upon them is not included in it?” This is refuted by what Allah mentioned in His Book regarding the disbelief of he who attaches himself to the Angels, ‘Īsā, and the righteous. He must submit to you that whoever associates anyone from the righteous in the worship of Allah, then he is the type of pagan mentioned in the Qur’ān – and this is the conclusion that is sought after...

### 3 - The Belief of the Latter-Day People is Paganism

He said:

...If you are aware that this, what the pagans of our time call “creed”, is the paganism mentioned in the Qur’ān and the paganism against which the Messenger of Allah ﷺ fought, know then that the paganism of the earlier people is less in severity than the paganism of the people of our time, and that is due to two things:

1-The earlier ones would only associate partners or call upon the Angels, the saints, and the idols along with Allah during times of ease. During times of severity they would be sincere to Allah in the religion, as the Exalted said: ﴿And when you are grasped by harm in the sea, those whom you call upon besides Him are lost. And when He saves you [by delivering you unto] land you turn away. And mankind is exceedingly ungrateful﴾, and: ﴿Say: “What do you think: if the punishment of Allah comes to you or the Last Hour; shall you call upon Allah – if indeed you are truthful?” Nay, you shall call upon Him to remove that which you are praying about – if He wills – and you shall forget that which you associate as a partner﴾, and: ﴿And when harm afflicts man, he calls upon his Lord, turning to Him...say: “Take delight in your disbelief for a short while. Indeed, you are from the companions of the Fire.”﴾, and: ﴿And when the waves envelop them like shadows they worship Allah, sincerely in their religion﴾

Whoever understands this issue that Allah clarified in His Book, that the pagans whom the Messenger of Allah ﷺ fought used to call upon Allah and call upon others in times of ease, and that during times of difficulty and severity they would call upon Allah alone and without any partners, and they would forget their masters [*sādāil*] – the distinction between the paganism of our time and the paganism of the early ones will be clear to him, however; where is he whose heart deeply understands this issue? Allah’s help is sought.

2-The early ones worship along with Allah, people who were close to Him: Prophets, saints, Angels, or stones or trees that are obedient to Allah and not disobedient. The people of our times

however, call besides Allah, those who are from the most corrupt of people; those upon whom they call are reported to have committed lewd acts such as fornication, theft, abandonment of prayer, and so on. The one who possess this belief in the righteous or that which does not disobey – such as a piece of wood or a stone – is not as bad as the one who possess this belief in someone whose corruption and depravity is witnessed and attested to.

When you ascertain the fact that those whom the Messenger of Allah ﷺ fought were sounder in intellect and less severe in their paganism than these people, you should also know that they have a misconception that they mention in response to what we have said. And it is from the greatest of their obfuscations, so listen attentively for its answer. They say: “Those who were mentioned in the Qur’ān did not bear witness that there is no god but Allah. They belied the Messenger, denied the Resurrection, belied the Qur’ān and called it sorcery. We, on the other hand, bear witness that there is no god but Allah and that Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allah; we confirm our belief in the Qur’ān; we have faith in the Resurrection; and we pray and we fast; how then can you make us out to be like them?”...

#### **4 - Charges of Disbelief against Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī and Specific Charges of Disbelief, as opposed to General Non-Specific Charges of Disbelief**

In the twenty first treatise found in *Tārīkh Najd* (page 348), Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb mentioned a charge of disbelief against Imām Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī and quoted it from Ibn Taymiyya with approval. He quoted Ibn Taymiyya saying: “And greater than that still, is that some of them compiled things of apostasy, as al-Fakhr al-Rāzī did in his compilation on the worship of celestial bodies. This is apostasy from Islam by the agreement of the Muslims.” Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb commented on these words of Ibn Taymiyya, saying:

Look to his words to see the distinction between the subtle/obscure beliefs and the specific disbelief that we are discussing. Contemplate his charges of disbelief upon their leaders: so-and-so and so-and-so specifically, and see their explicit apostasy. Contemplate his explicit mention of the consensus regarding Fakhr al-Dīn’s apostasy from Islam, even though he is one of the four Imāms according to your scholars. Does this fit with what you have understood from his words [in which he allegedly said] that a specific person cannot be charged with disbelief?

There are many fallacies here. One is the alleged consensus regarding al-Fakhr al-Rāzī’s disbelief, and another is their [Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb] claim that Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī wrote about the worship of celestial bodies. Notice also that he [Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb] explicitly stated that Ibn Taymiyya made specific charges of disbelief. This is contrary to the claim of some of their followers who say they would only mention general charges of disbelief and would not specify individuals.

As we mentioned earlier, it is not our intent to engage in an inductive and detailed reading of Shaykh Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb’s words, or the words of anyone else. We only wish to present supporting proofs from their works that establish the extremism of this view-point.

#### **The Wahhābī’s Position Regarding Anthropomorphism and Corporeality**

The Wahhābī’s position regarding anthropomorphism and negating Allah’s transcendence above resemblance to the creation is well-known and famous. They affirm a limit and direction for Allah, the Exalted; they believe that contingent acts subsist within Allah; and they believe that He sits upon the Throne with contact and physical movement, etc. There is no doubt whatsoever that these beliefs oppose the creed of Ahl al-Sunna wa al-Jamā’a. In this creed, the Wahhābīs have followed their first Imām, Ibn

Taymiyya. They have taken all of this from him. They understood his words from the explanations of his student, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya. For reference, one may peruse Ibn Taymiyya's *Naqd Asās al-Taqdīs, Manhāj al-Sunna*, and other books. I have written many books on this topic, establishing that Ibn Taymiyya believed in anthropomorphism and its implications, that he completely opposed the Ash'arīs, and that he had his own complete doctrine to which he invited others. His statements were not mere slips of the pen or ecstatic expressions as some would like to believe.

### **MUḤAMMAD RASHĪD RIḌĀ (D.1345 HĪJRĀ)**

As I see it, Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā was one of the founders of the Salafi School – in its general meaning – who outlined its foundations and fundamentals. Within his books, he laid the down the ground work for the idea that the effects of the latter-day scholars have been disrupted, claiming that he was an independent scholar [*mujtahid*] who had the right to go back to the original sources and examine them as the early major *Mujtahids* did. He claimed that he was only obliged to follow that to which his research and investigation led him. There is no doubt that he was affected in this by his Shaykh, Muḥammad 'Abduh, and by Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī.

Rashīd Riḍā expressed many views and opinions that affirm this attitude, in addition to his many well-known disputes with the Shaykhs and administration of al-Azhar and his battles with Shaykh Yūsuf al-Dajawī and his companion, and Shaykh al-Kawtharī, and those who supported them.

#### **1- His Explicit Agreement with the Wahhābī call**

In an important book of his called *al-Manār wa al-Azhar*, he said:

*Intermediaries between the Creator and the creation and refutation against some scholars regarding it*

On pages 318 and 533 there are two lengthy articles on the subject of intermediaries between the creation and the Creator: a subject in which the innovators have gone to extremes and in which they have fallen into clear idolatry and have taken equals with Allah, the Exalted. Shaykh al-Islām Aḥmad b. Taymiyya wrote an essay by the same name in which he refuted their obfuscations. Around that time it was published and had a great effect upon the people because it thwarted them [from that] by explaining its odious misguidance and defending the doctrine of Divine unity which is the foundation of Allah's religion upon the tongues of all of His Prophets. It delighted the people of Divine unity and the followers of the Book and the Sunna and it perturbed the innovators among the grave-worshippers and shrine-worshippers.

One of the scholars endeavoured to refute it, gathering treatises on the issue and topics related to it, such as visitation of the graves and the innovations that occur along with that – works written by some deceased superstitious people – and he wrote an introduction to those many blameworthy innovations, supporting them with contradictory and conflicting theories.

Hence, we wrote those two articles in refutation against him. That was the first time a well-known scholar from al-Azhar in our era wrote and distributed a book in support of pagan beliefs and superstitious innovations, supporting them with theories and statements that go against the Mighty Book, the Lofty Sunna, the way of the pious predecessors, and the texts of the *Mujtahid* Imāms. We explained this in the utmost detail – and our experience with that man was other than this...



It is obvious that the style adopted by Rashīd Riḍā was the exact same style as Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb. You see in his words here the exact same expressions used by Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, such as “superstitious”, “grave-worshippers”, “shrine-worshippers”, “clear idolatry”, “pagan beliefs”, and “superstitious innovations”. Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā indicated that his focus on this matter was a testimony to *al-Manār*’s (the magazine he used to publish) efforts in reforming al-Azhar; as both he and his Shaykh, Muḥammad ‘Abduh were dedicated to what they called the “reformation of al-Azhar”.

## 2- Riḍā’s Accusation against al-Azhar and Some of its Scholars, saying they were “Grave-worshippers” attempting to spread Grave-Worship among People

On page 22 of *al-Manār wa al-Azhar*:

I criticised *Nur al-Islam* magazine, al-Azhar’s official publication, for the articles and verdicts they published from him [Shaykh Yūsuf al-Dajawī] in support of common innovations among the laity of the Umma – especially the innovations and evil acts that take place at the graves and the calumny against Salafism in general and Wahhābism in particular; especially in this time in which the Islamic world from east to west and all in between, such as Egypt – may Allah safeguard her – has been affable towards the Saudi state, defended it, and censured the Egyptian state for not recognizing it...

Elsewhere in his book, he said:

Perhaps most of the Azharī sermonizers who are spread about here and there have the same orientation as *al-Manār* and those who read its Qur’ānic exegesis. Indeed, I know the most choice among them...*al-Manār* was the first to propose to al-Azhar the establishment of this blessed group. Shaykh al-Ḍawāhirī aspires to make all of them superstitious grave-worshippers who oppose *al-Manār* and stand in the way of its call. Each time he tests someone who is set to be appointed or sent abroad, most of his focus is set at discovering what that individual believes regarding the Salafī concept of Divine unity and blameworthy innovation related to grave-worship. His usual way of ascertaining that is to ask that person’s opinion regarding *al-Manār* [magazine], its Qur’ānic exegesis, and its author – and he might add to those questions other things that set him apart from his opponents and malign their call to the Book, the Sunna, and following the Salaf. It has been established within al-Azhar that this is his desire and those who have to take the test seek to avoid his anger using whatever permissible dissimulation they can. It has reached the point that if someone gives a misleading impression and says: “Zayd and ‘Amr are scholars who serve the religion; both make mistakes and are correct at other times”, then he will lose al-Ḍawāhirī’s respect; he is not pleased with those who call to Islam and guide its people unless they make up things, fawn flattery towards him, and say what they don’t believe.

### His Allegiance to Āl-Sa‘ūd

Rashīd Riḍā openly announced his agreement and following of Āl-Sa‘ūd in their call and said that they resembled the Children of Israel during the days of our Master Mūsā ﷺ. He encouraged them to have patience and he gave them glad tidings of victory from Allah, the Exalted, against their enemies among the “grave-worshippers” and “pagans”.

He said in *al-Manār wa al-Azhar*:

*The First Sermon I Delivered to Ibn Sa‘ūd and His Response*

I said to Ibn Sa‘ūd in the first sitting I had with him after arriving at Mecca: Certainly, you were harmed before and after, yet you were patient and Allah gave you victory as He promised those who are patient. It is fitting that your people take the example and consider what Allah mentioned with respect to the Children of Israel and Mūsā ﷺ: ﴿They said: “We have been harmed before you came to us and after you have come to us.” He said: “Perhaps your Lord will destroy your enemy and grant you succession in the land and see how you will do.”﴾. Alas, see to it that you perfect your works by being thankful for this new bounty. Indeed, Allah is looking to see how you will do, that He may reward you for it. He [Ibn Sa‘ūd] said in response: “By Allah! We fear nothing but the Qur’ān!” Contemplate this answer, o people of insight.

### **His Position Regarding the Wahhābī Call and His Rejection of the Well-established Schools such as the Ash‘arīs and Māturīdīs**

It is well-known that Shaykh Muḥammad ‘Abduh was Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā’s role-model, and that the former was the first one to distance himself from the Ash‘arī and Māturīdī schools and claim independent *Ijtihād* and maintain that he was able to pick and choose opinions as he wished – even if the opinions he preferred were philosophical or overly rationalistic in nature.

Rashīd Riḍā said:

As far as the author of *al-Manār* is concerned, let the esteemed ones present here and all who read *al-Manār* know that he does not follow any of the Imāms in his creed, so how is it conceivable that he follows Shaykh Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb – assuming that he does in fact have a school of thought that is distinct from the school of Imām Aḥmad and the Salaf of this nation? He who does not follow Imām al-Ash‘arī, even though he grew up following his doctrine, has more right that he does not follow Shaykh Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb.

It is not hidden that his claim of not following Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb does not contradict his agreement with him, his following of his ideas, and his support for the latter’s call. The most this indicates is that he asserted *Ijtihād* for himself in this matter, which is either accepted or rejected.

These words stem from the firm fundamentals that he took from his Shaykh, Muḥammad ‘Abduh. When Shaykh ‘Ulaysh spoke to him [‘Abduh] about his lessons on the book *al-‘Aqā’id al-Nasafiya* and about the fact that he had opposed the Ash‘arīs and preferred the doctrine of the Mu‘tazila, he confirmed that. Rashīd Riḍā mentions in his famous book, *Tārīkh al-Ustādh al-Imām* (1/134):

Shaykh ‘Ulaysh said: “It has reached me that you are teaching the commentary of *al-‘Aqā’id al-Nasafiya*.” He [‘Abduh] said: “Yes.” Shaykh ‘Ulaysh said: “It has reached me that you have preferred the doctrine of the Mu‘tazila over the doctrine of the Ash‘arīs.” He [‘Abduh] said: “If I don’t blindly follow al-Ash‘arī, why should I blindly follow the Mu‘tazila? I eschew the blind following of all of them and instead follow the proofs.” Shaykh ‘Ulaysh said: “Someone reliable informed me of that.” He [‘Abduh] said: “Let this reliable person come before us and distinguish between the two doctrines in order than he then inform us of which of the two I preferred.”

The basis for the claim of following the Salaf rests on abandoning the independent efforts of the past scholars and not relying on them, claiming that one – even if he is not qualified – is able to engage in *Ijtihād* and extrapolate legal rulings from the source texts. If this viewpoint gains ascendancy it will most certainly lead to the belittlement of the rank of *Ijtihād* and will encourage and goad every person of weak understanding who aspires for leadership to claim *Ijtihād* for himself – and the tribulations and problems that will result in are not hidden.

## **THE EFFECT OF SALAFISM ON THE UNITY OF THE MUSLIMS**

- 1- Separation and disconnection between the current generations and more than ten centuries of scholarship and detailed research in every science and subject, resulting in a loss of the Umma's efforts.
- 2- Weakening the stance of the current generations in their confrontations with the severe and multiple attacks against the religion of Islam. This is accomplished by disconnecting the current generations from the previous scholars of Islam and preventing them from benefiting from them or relying upon them. This results in our severe weakness in the modern sciences – as we see with our own eyes in many fields.
- 3- A manufactured disconnect between the present and the past, resulting in accusations against the beliefs of the general body of Islamic scholars. This of course results in weakening confidence in them and doubting their knowledge and sciences. He who loses sight of his past will undoubtedly lose sight of where he is and where he is going.
- 4- Inclination to charge one's opponents with disbelief or blameworthy innovation, resulting in severe psychological disorders and doubts regarding everything transmitted to us by those of the past. The least of these effects is the feeling of emotional withdraw, which could in turn push some weak minded individuals – as most of those who adopt this position are – and motivate them to pursue extreme courses of action in their dealings with others.
- 5- Undoubtedly, these effects and results affect them because they were ignorant regarding the distinction between the unequivocal and the speculative in both doctrine and jurisprudence. They declared some speculative matters unequivocal and opposed certain unequivocal matters. All of this stems from ideas and ways that suffer from major gaps and errors.

## **CONCLUSION**

### **On Disagreements and their Resultant Problems**

There is no doubt that the science of theology is the most appropriate science for researching the disputes between the various Islamic sects and attempting to know which of them is correct and incorrect, or which of them is more correct than the others. It is legally encouraged for the Muslims to argue about the affairs of their religion, contrary to those who believe that it is unlawful. This is because disagreements do in fact exist, and working to either remove or diminish differences is obligatory as much as humanly possible. It is impossible to remove these disagreements or even attempt to remove them without recourse to theology and arguing in a way that is best. There is no doubt that speaking about matters related to the fundamentals of the religion – what is conventionally known as creed – is sought after and desired.

Neglecting disagreements and attempting to forget them or sweep them under the rug will never be a viable alternative to attempting to reach what is closest and reach the truth and what is correct. The fact that it is impossible to reach an agreement that is inclusive of all of the Muslims cannot justify sweeping disagreements under the rug. The fundamentals of theological rhetoric indicate that differences do in fact exist. It is also established in the upright religion that it is obligatory for Muslims to work together. So here we have two basic premises:

- A. Disagreements exist and will continue
- B. Cooperation between the Muslims is obligatory

So, if we say that it is impossible for us to work together as Muslims until we are all in complete agreement in doctrine – both in its fundamentals and subsidiary branch issues – then this implies that cooperation is impossible, which is a false conclusion.

If we say that cooperation is obligatory and that it is conditional upon agreement, that means we must forget our disagreements and sweep them under the rug. Now of course this is also incorrect because it entails neglecting that which is real and ignoring that which cannot be ignored. Every sect claims that it is correct and on the truth; how then can each sect be commanded to ignore that in which they claim they are right?

The sound view based upon the fundamentals of theological rhetoric calls for everyone – with a certain degree of investigation – to gather between the two premises. The first premise is taken from the sensory world and sense perception, and it is regarding the means of knowledge. The second premise is taken from the unequivocal texts of the religion. It is incorrect to neglect or ignore either of them.

The logical conclusion is that it is obligatory to work together while maintaining one's disagreement with the other, and that it is obligatory to adopt practical measures in which these two premises and realities are kept. In sum, it is obligatory to work together with others while taking note of disagreements. In this circumstance, one must either base cooperation on that in which there is disagreement or that in which there is agreement, and obviously constructive work can only be based on that in which there is agreement.

Obligatory actions that must be carried out need to be based on the points in which there is agreement between the Muslims, while at the same time not neglecting the unique features of each Islamic sect and making sure to continue arguing in a way that is best.

Some people look to the disagreements among the Muslims as impending threats and dangers that must be eradicated, and that they are harms that lead the Umma to its own destruction. We hold a dissenting viewpoint and say that even though the existence of well-considered disagreements between the major sects results in some harms, it results in greater benefits overall. The most important of these benefits is constant investigation and continual research into these fundamentals. This in turn results in competition in refuting the obfuscations of the external opponents who do not belong to the religion – as Imām al-Ghazālī said when he argued with the philosophers: “I am not addressing you with the tongue of the Ash‘arīs alone; I am addressing you with the tongue of all the Islamic sects entire: all of them are united against you.”

And Allah grants all success  
Sa‘īd Foudah

